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ABSTRACT

Four papers prepared under the Robert Vosper Fellowship Program of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and delivered at the 1992 annual meeting are presented. "International Cooperation in the Field of Name Authority Data: Observations and Recommendations" (Francoise Bourdon) presents an early diagnosis of problems found with manual and automated authority files concerning the names of persons, corporate bodies, and uniform titles for anonymous classics; and it proposes some solutions. "Personal Access to Library Services by Use of Existing Technologies" (Titia van der Werf) reports on a study carried out under the 1991-92 Vosper program. It explores the connections among automation, service, and personal access for the library user in the framework of Personal Information Technology. "Preservation Education in the Nineties: A Preliminary Report" (Michele V. Cloonan), a 1991 Vosper study, considers preservation and conservation programs in library schools through questionnaires and interviews. "Minimal Level Cataloguing by National Bibliographic Agencies: Summary Report" (Jay H. Lambrecht) discusses the threat to universal bibliographic control that differing minimal level standards cause. (SLD)

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IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE NEW DELHI 1992

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WORKSHOP THEME (IF APPLICABLE):

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF NAME AUTHORITY DATA: OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Robert Vosper IFLA Fellows Programme 1990

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Centre de coordination bibliographique et technique
Bibliothèque Nationale, France

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INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF NAME AUTHORITY DATA:

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Françoise BOURDON

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How can IFLA contribute to solving problems in Name Authority Control at the international level ?

In April 1990, IFLA selected this theme for a study to be made within the framework of the Robert Vosper Fellows Programme, under the auspices of the UBCIM Programme. The final report, about one hundred pages, in French, was submitted to the IFLA General Secretary in August 1991, during the Moscow Conference. It is entitled "La coopération internationale en matière de données d'autorité auteurs : constats, réflexions, recommandations". An English translation is currently in progress and should be published soon by IFLA.

The international context of the study :

The introduction explains the international context of this study concerning name authority files used to manage national bibliographies :

- **the results of the international inquiry made in 1989 by the IFLA Section on Bibliography (1) stressing the necessity to examine more thoroughly some aspects of authority files difficult to study by means of a closed questionnaire**
- **the recommendations passed during the Seminar on Bibliographic Records (Stockholm, August 1990)(2) and during the UNIMARC/CCF Workshop (Florence, June 1991)(3) asking IFLA, and more precisely its UBCIM Programme, to study the conditions necessary for setting up an international system for the exchange of name authority data.**

Indeed the international market for bibliographic records is favourable, and it seems quite normal to try to get the authority records which correspond to the headings of these bibliographic records. But, although the will to exchange authority data at the international level was evoked several times during international meetings, it has not found expression in facts. The work done within the framework of this Vosper fellowship presents an early diagnosis of problems and proposes some solutions.

Research sources :

The research was based on relevant literature, published in English or in French in professional journals; on the results of the 1989 inquiry (1); and on the thorough examination of the goals and functions of eight name authority files managed by national bibliographic agencies and visited during study tours in Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Germany, Portugal, Netherlands and France. This study takes into account manual and automatized authority files concerning names of persons, corporate bodies and uniform titles for anonymous classics.

The first part of the report stresses the ambiguity of the international standardization goals in the field of name authority data.

The study starts from the time of the International Conference on Cataloguing Principles in 1961 until the publication of the format for international exchange , UNIMARC/Authorities, in 1991. The sharing of tasks, by national bibliographic agencies, one fundamental principle of Universal Bibliographic Control, has been forgotten in the publications devoted to international standardization in the field of authority data. The contents and functions of a name authority record have never been defined with the precision used for bibliographic records. Types of data which have to be authoritative data at the international level have not yet been identified in the case of name authority data.

The second part tries to define types of data deemed profitable for international exchange.

Because national bibliographies record both works of national authors and works of foreign authors (translations, for example), the authority files which manage these bibliographies partly record the same names of persons, the same corporate bodies and the same uniform titles. But although these files are international in scope, they remain national in aims.
No existing file has been conceived for the purpose of exchanging authority data. Each bibliographic agency has defined its own goals with regard to its own needs and resources. In this way management authority files were created, the records of which are so short that they be used only locally, and identification authority files, the records of which are so complete that they may be used to manage shared cataloguing databases. Only these identification records are detailed enough to be useful outside the bibliographic database for the management of which they have been established, so these records alone are interesting for international exchange.

The efficiency of automated authority files also depends largely on the software that manages them. According to their age, authority files may contain both management and identification records, in variable proportions, and they can or cannot be linked to the bibliographic files they help manage. Editions issuing from these authority files may vary greatly, from printed editions to unloaded CD-ROMs, and a given record may have different contents, according to the formats used to make it available : output or input formats, paper, tapes, microfiches. Because computing procedures differ greatly and because of the lack of common aims, it is difficult to control name authority in an international context.
In order to take all these local particulars as well as differences in national rules of cataloguing, international co-operation must be conceived not to produce a systematic exchange of global authority records but rather to provide an informal exchange of authority data extracted by users from their records, according to their needs, which can be adapted to their local systems and their file requirements. This flexibility in the organization of

international exchange in the field of authority data does not exempt national bibliographic agencies from their obligation to respect a strict discipline when establishing authority records : only data concerning their national authors should be authoritative at the international level.

The third part of the report proposes some recommendations and suggests an action plan.

As a general policy, every national bibliographic agency should be held responsible for creating an authority file for its national authors (persons, corporate bodies, and, when appropriate uniform titles for anonymous classics), for recording reference authority data for these authors, and for making them available on formats easily accessible to all. With regard to foreign authors, each agency should give priority to the re-use of authority data elaborated for them by the bibliographic agencies responsible. In order to make efficient the application of UBC principles in the field of authority data, standardization must go further into detail ; it is quite necessary to define the sample contents of an authority record and the sources from which the data must be elaborated; to determine what kind of data are able to be authoritative at the international level and how they can be mentioned in all the authority records devote to a given entity throughout the world; to update and to finish off existing standards which define form and structure of authority headings and to promote their use by cataloguing services. To satisfy this last requirement, a study of the feasibility of a revision of Names of persons ; national usages for entry in catalogues was carried out in Spring 1992 and a workshop will be devoted to this subject during the 1992 IFLA Conference, to decide on action to be taken following this preliminary study.
The final step, and the most ambitious one, might be the creation (after more than ten years of speculation !) of an international system to exchange authority data. Centralized or decentralized, such a system implies the existence of an international consensus to define and to use an ISADN (International Standard Auhtority Data Number) for each entity which forms an authority record. However, today international exchange of authority data is restrained more by organizational problems than by technical problems. Without a steady will to succeed no international cooperation will ever exist. It is now high time that librarians really involved themselves in carrying out their projects.

The report also contains three annexes : the list of authority services and persons contacted during the work ; about a hundred examples of authority records produced by eleven different countries and displyed according to input and output when applicable, and a list of some thirty references.

(5)

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(2) Seminar on bibliographic records. Proceedings of the seminar held in Stockholm, 15-16 August 1990, and sponsored by the IFLA UBCIM Programme and the IFLA Division of Bibliographic Control / Edited by Ross Bourne. - München : Saur, 1992 (UBCIM Publications : new series ; 7)

(3) UNIMARC/CCF Workshop, Florence, 5-7 June 1991, organized by UNESCO and the IFLA UBCIM Programme [in press].

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Division: VOSPER FELLOWS

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WORKSHOP THEME (IF APPLICABLE):

Title: **Personal access to library services by use of existing technologies**

by
Titia van der Werf
RABIN
(Netherlands Council for Libraries and Information Services)

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IFLA conference paper August 30, 1992
Robert Vosper IFLA Fellows Programme, Class of 1991

Title: Personal access to library services by use of existing technologies

by
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RABIN
(Netherlands Council for Libraries and Information Services)

The project "Personal access to library services" is carried out for the Robert Vosper IFLA Fellows Programme 1991/92 by Mrs T. van der Werf in liaison with the IFLA UDT Programme Director and with the support of the RABIN, the Netherlands Council for Libraries and Information Services.

Foreword

Come and taste the curry I am preparing for the IFLA Robert Vosper Programme! I will show you around the kitchen, name the pots and pans, spices and ingredients I use. I am very happy that IFLA has set up its shamiana in India. The long-standing tradition of indian cooking provides just the right setting for a good spicy dish that is at once hot and smooth, pickled and refined.
After the guided tour, please give me your suggestions to enhance the taste, season the dish with your experiences. Indian recipes are flexible and food is like information. It is part of daily life. Everybody needs it, everybody can process it. We are cooks just like we are information specialists.

Introduction

For the IFLA Robert Vosper Programme 1991 I am carrying out a study on personal access to computerized library services. Three catchwords are of importance in this study: automation, service and personal access. It is the combination of these 3 elements, the blend of availability of automated tools, level of support offered and level of individualization that shapes the service environment of the library. The question being addressed here is: how does this service environment interface with the personal information environment of the end user?
In this study emphasis lays on the technological component of the interface.
In other words it is not an orientation on personal information service dealing with issues like information packaging and end user profiles. The study focusses on the technical infrastructure of personal information service looking into technical access issues.
First I will take a closer look at the characteristics of personal system configurations, also called PIT: Personal Information Technology. What are the linking and connection requirements of this technology?
Then I will give an overview of automated library services and end user access options offered by libraries.
Finally I will outline a policy framework for library organisations enabling them to effectively provide personal access within the context of existing services and existing technology. The basic attitude underlying the study being a pragmatic "do what you can with what you have".

PART I: The PIT-environment

1. Defining PIT

Consumer electronics
The notion of personal information technology and products comes from the IT-market. In the IT-industry, leading firms like IBM, Siemens, Toshiba, Sony have a Personal Information Products (PIP)-division. These divisions compete on the consumer market. They offer a wide range of consumer electronic goods that we, consumers, buy: calculators, personal computers, compact-disc players, CD-ROM players, televisions, telephones, printers, faxes, video recorders, still video cameras, handpalm gadgets, electronic books... All this is the PIT-market. At heart it is the downsizing of professional technology into compact, easy to use and affordable technology.

Full-digital systems
Personal electronics are increasingly full-digital systems. They make use of electronic recording, processing and transmission techniques. Last year we saw the introduction of digital audio-tape, this year we await digital HDTV.
Multi-media products are appearing on the market, integrating different types of digital information: data, audio, still and moving video.

Personal telecommunications systems (PTS)
Telecommunications systems become more personal and assist end users in receiving and transmitting digitised information. Telecommunications equipment has been liberalised from PTT-monopoly and floods the consumer market with hand-held phones, personal faxes etc...
Network technologies experiment with personal infrastructures like the Personal Communications Network (PCN). This is a complete public-switched wireless phone network for indoor and outdoor use. Numbers may be assigned to each user, not to each phone.

2. The importance of PIT for library services

Why should librarians be interested in this technology?

End user technology
In the first place because this technology increasingly assists end users in processing digitised information. The universal trend towards digital representation of information for storage, transport and processing permeates the whole fabric of our society.

The end user of information is increasingly confronted with the seperation of functions associated with consuming information: on the one hand digital systems that interact without human intervention and on the other, analogue systems that allow the eye and brain to process information directly. Progress towards an informed society depends on our ability to cope with this development of a "split" cognitive world.
It implies in particular, increasing dependance on digital systems and reliance on the use of information technology. The use of IT enables rapid access to information and increases information processing power. Only the widespread use of personalised information technology makes this possible at the individual level. In other words, PIT makes the democratisation of information use possible. It is the only way to prevent the concentration of information resources in the hands of a few people who have acquired monopoly on storage and processing power. The corollary to the "free-flow of information" is therefore the worldwide and cheap availability of personal information and telecommunications systems. Both are basic to uphold the democratic values of our society [HAEFNER].

Personal service support
Another reason for librarians to take account of PIT is the important place it takes in their service support structure.
The strongest asset of library service is the direct link with the individual end user. Where newcomers on the information-market have to build up from scratch and look for new outlets, libraries have a well-established customerbase. This gives them in many ways a competitive advantage.
In early times when books were not borrowed and chained to the desk, the library was the only public access point to published information. As such the library developed into a public meeting place where information is not only transmitted by means of print but also by word of mouth. This rich socio-cultural tradition of libraries has to be tended with care in our modern market- and technology-driven society.
However, the traditional relationship with library visitors is changing. Visitors are increasingly becoming end users of information systems and libraries information service providers.
A review of end user studies shows a growing awareness of changing end user requirements. But strikingly, much concern is expressed about end user instruction requirements when making computer-based services available - instruction in both information-handling techniques and in computer usage. Most studies complain about technical constraints and user-unfriendly systems [EISENBERG].

Although legitimate in many respects, this attitude inhibits the straight-forward and practical implementation of end user access to library systems.
One specialist who does not take a dim view of end user competence, Mr. Graham Cornish, believes librarians should "deal with the situation in which the end user has both the intellectual capability, technical skills and practical hardware to search for documents, identify those of most relevance and generate requests for them" [CORNISH]
In order to reach their end user-base, libraries will increasingly have to provide personal access to their information services. If librarians want to put the user in control of his /her own information seeking, they will have to adapt their service support structure to the PIT environment.
To capture the "flavour" of PIT service support I will take a look at the strategies of the more market-driven information specialists.
Publishers, for example, have already made detailed studies of the end user computing environment and the available tools for information use. Their market orientation for electronic publishing has made them aware of the PIT-environment and the need to interface with it. [KIST]

3. Characteristics of PIT

Library information services are mainly concerned with PIT-systems based on microcomputers, associated software, communication systems and peripherals.

PC-configurations

Typical configurations like the stand-alone mode and the terminal mode will be discussed. The LAN-mode, or integrated PC-network mode, is not considered a true PIT-configuration. The principal benefit of a LAN is to allow users to share centrally located files and devices, in other words departmental computing, not personal computing.
Next to storage capacity and processing power, personal computing requires widespread network-access to communicate with the outside world, to avoid isolation, to access information resources and import external data. Closed personal systems are of limited use. Transfering data by hand, that is keying information into personal database systems, is too time-consuming. The networking possibilities determine the quality of the PIT-environment.
The most elementary networking environment is the "sneakers-network", the carrier for floppy disks, usually sent by post or handed over personally. The main PIT-network is the telephone network.

Importance of the public switched telephone network
The networking environment best-suited to PIT-systems is the public network: more specifically the public switched telephone network. This is true from both standpoints of technical accessibility and information resource availability.
Private networks, wether LAN or WAN, usually require special, expensive interfacing parts like a Packet Assembler and Disassembler (PAD) or an Ethernet-board. They usually provide specialized and not publicly accessible information resources. Only those private networks with a gateway to public networks are to a certain extent "open to the outside world". Even then they may provide only one-way access to the public network.
The public network is accessible with consumer electronics: telephone, PC with a modem, fax. Therefore it is the networking environment par excellence of PIT.
In my final report I will pay special attention to telecommunication service characteristics, the position of Public Telecommunication Operators (PTO), the international push for deregulation and government telecommunications policies of the United States and the European Community.

Standardisation in the PIT-environment
The relatively high level of standardisation achieved in telecommunications, mainly due to international agreement between PTOs and telecommunications industry in CCITT context, is in contrast with the still overwhelmingly proprietary nature of PC hard- and software products. Existing technology in the PIT-environment has not yet benefited from the rush to open systems. Incompatible operating systems, graphical user interfaces, textprocessing and database applications generate different computing platforms at individual sites.
The next question is: how do library systems interface with such an heterogenous end user environment?

PART II: Library support of PIT

1. Desktop research

The practice of library support of PIT is not documented as such in the literature. But there is an extensive overview of the state of the art of library automation, undertaken under the auspices of the Commission of the European Communities. The studies undertaken in each member country and in the United States in 1986, have recently been updated. They all dedicate a section to IT-based user services -which were in 1986 a comparative novelty in libraries, but by now can be regarded as more or less commonplace in most countries [CEC LIB-2 reports].

2. Direct information gathering

In addition I have sent a questionnaire to a sample of this CEC-target group in order to collect more specific information on end user access-configurations and policy statements on PIT-support. This additional information will only be used to illustrate and examplify the state of the art, not to quantify it.

3. From housekeeping functions to self-service systems

Computer-based library systems were from the start designed to automate "housekeeping" functions like cataloguing, local circulation and acquisitions. However from the moment service tasks to the public were being automated, library visitors became potential end users of library systems too.
Library reference service was the first computerized domain to become available as a self-service system to library visitors. From the 1970s onward, reference librarians have been assisted in their information providing function by online database services and local automated files. These automated tools have now moved from the librarians' realm to public access.
CD-ROM and online search systems provide different access characteristics. Issues associated with up-to-date coverage, availability, telecommunication costs, multiuser access are much debated in the current literature. Integrating access to CD-ROM and online systems seems an important objective. From the user perspective, downloading and reformatting external bibliographical records for personal databases appears to be a most critical issue.
Unresolved legal aspects of downloading like property-rights to title descriptions in databases and copy-rights hamper the provision of this facility and leads to "screen-snatching" practices by end users.
Recently libraries have shifted their attention to document delivery systems, a logical next step: search services create a demand for delivery service.
They have quite naturally sought to expand their collection through inter-library loan (ILL) as a means to access the full text of a cited source outside the local OPAC. As the reliance on ILL for delivery services increases, the growing importance of library internetworking comes into the picture. More specifically, the issue of public-access to this networking environment has to be dealt with. Integrating search, ordering and delivery services into one self-service type of system seems to be the ultimate goal libraries have set themselves for this decade [CLEVELAND].

4. From onsite public access to remote access

Another step in the evolution of end user access is remote access through networking.
Library use of networks was at first dedicated to inter-library and inter-institutional data-exchange. Typical examples are shared cataloguing and inter-library loan. Libraries are just beginning to provide network access to a range of their services.
Interestingly library networks, dedicated to inter-library functions and setup by bibliographic utilities like WLN, RLIN, OCLC, are not designed for end user access and therefore do not provide the right networking infrastructure for library services. To provide remote access, libraries therefore seek the networking environment of their end users. In actual practice, university libraries provide access through the national research and education networks and public libraries mainly provide access through regional public telephone and broadcasting networks.
The provision of services and access through telecommunications by use of networks, telephone, facsimile, broadcasting and other technologies, is an important emerging area.
The many experiments carried out by libraries in the field of network-access still show signs of immaturity in this field but also a growing awareness of the huge possibilities to diversify access options.
Telefacsimile is increasingly used for transmitting ILL requests and materials. From the user perspective this technology is best-suited to the PIT-environment. Libraries however are confronted with problems of logistics (time-consuming manual fax-input) and network-planning aspirations of the bibliographic utilities who control library internetworking. The academic literature on electronic document delivery is therefore disproportionately critical of telefacsimile use. It advocates high investments in the design and development of new network-applications for document transfer and document exchange formats. The arguments put forward, however legitimate from the standpoint of efficiency improvement within the interlibrary context, do not address the problem of end user access.
In conclusion it should be noted that although much is being done, most is done in the domain of future network technologies (OSI/ISDN applications) and relatively little is done with existing technologies (telephone network, PIT-configurations).
With current consumer technology, already a lot of experience can be gained that can later be used to support future technology. In providing end user access, it is therefore not the technology that counts, but the service support structure.

PART III: Policy framework

The provision of end user access to computer-based library services is becoming an established goal in library strategic planning. In order to introduce systematic quality improvement of library service support it is necessary to formulate more specifically access goals, access levels and access requirements. To this end it will be necessary to set up a more general guideline for library supply of end user services, in which equal attention is given to:
a) define a policy and objectives for end user access
b) implement and maintain these objectives
c) assess the actual performance of service support
This requires a strong commitment to and understanding of service support at all levels in the organization.

In my final report I will suggest some important aspects of end user access to include in such a policy framework. I cannot yet anticipate on the final formula - but you can be assured that the emphasis will lay on conformance to the PIT-environment!

Afterword

Now that you have tasted the dish and know the recipe, I hope I have enticed you to experiment for yourselves. Let me give you this advice: use local ingredients and take example from indian cooking practice. With humble means but a rich variety of ingredients you can make the most savoury dish.
Put on an apron and don't forget to add a hint of PIT to every dish you make.

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IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE NEW DELHI 1992

70-VOSPER-4-E

Vosper Fellows Presentations

WORKSHOP THEME (IF APPLICABLE):

Preservation Education in the Nineties: A Preliminary Report

MICHELE V. CLOONAN (Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of California at Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California, USA)

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Preservation Education in the Nineties: A Preliminary Report

Background

In 1991 I was selected as one of the Vosper Programme Fellows. For my project I proposed to undertake a study of preservation and conservation programmes in library schools, libraries, and other institutions in order to determine current and possible future directions of the field. Based on this study, I planned to draft a model program for preservation education that could be implemented in library schools. My method of data collection would be questionnaires and interviews.

Over the past year I have conducted a number of interviews, a process which began, appropriately, in Moscow at last year's IFLA conference. Unfortunately, many of the people whom I had hoped to interview either didn't attend the conference or else left early because of the coup. So I have been conducting interviews by mail.

Early on in the interview process I decided to interview not only librarians and library school professors, but individuals whose connection to the preservation field offered new perspectives. Interviewees have included people from granting agencies as well as researchers in the pure sciences as well as in computer science. In some cases the interviewees requested anonymity. Because this resulted in greater candor, I readily agreed to that condition. In the final report I will discuss the various ideas that emerged in the interviews without identifying the interviewees. If I can get the consent of the interviewees, I will include an appendix which lists their names.

Because I am still in the data collection stage of my research, I am not yet ready to draw any conclusions or provide any forecasts. I would like to share with you, however, some interviewee observations.

I asked each interviewee to identify critical issues for the nineties. Their responses can be divided into the following: 1. national (American) preservation strategies, 2. international strategies, 3. preservation of nonbook formats, 4. funding, 5. research & development, and, 6. dissemination of information.

National (American) Preservation Strategies

Most of the Americans whom I have interviewed feel strongly that preservation should be viewed fundamentally as a management problem. The consensus was that the treatment of individual items is no longer a priority and that we must

focus more attention on reformatting, deacidification, environmental standards, paper manufacture, access to information, etc. In other words, concern for individual items is now somewhat overshadowed by more comprehensive approaches. Some of these views have already been expressed in American library literature and so are not *new*. However, these views are in striking contrast to the views of preservationists in other parts of the world who are more concerned about the treatment of individual items, and the training of conservators in bench work. "I should like to observe that I consider the problem of teaching preservation from the point of view of manual activity: not intellectual extrapolations, which are always very good, but bench work..." opines Lourdes Blanco, Director of document conservation for Biblioteca Nacional de Venezuela.

The Americans also felt that current library school training does not prepare students adequately for the kinds of administrative challenges that are a part of the newer comprehensive approach to preservation.

International Strategies

My generalization here are tentative because I plan to interview a number of other people. Also, conditions vary so widely in different parts of the world. However, the three most commonly expressed priorities were that there should be more cooperative preservation programs among countries, that there is an urgent need for more dissemination of preservation information, and that some areas of the world need more training opportunities. Some felt that the EC countries could organize some of these cooperative activities.

Most recently, interviewees have expressed a strong concern about the civil wars in Yugoslavia and elsewhere. What is happening to libraries and archives? How can preservationists monitor these situations? One person suggested that there be an international watchdog group to informally monitor libraries and archives in imperiled locations and to offer assistance.

Preservation of Nonbook Formats

Several respondents indicated that there should be more research and development in the area of nonbook preservation. Although reformatting is often an appropriate solution, sometimes an institution may want to save the original (e.g. a master film, vinyl records, etc.).

Funding

Funding (or lack thereof) is a universal concern: every respondent mentioned it in one context or another.

Some respondents felt that we all need to learn to work with fewer resources. Others felt that we need to seek funding opportunities much more aggressively in the future because libraries have been so under-funded in the past. "We must incorporate conservation into the forefront or money problems will push it to the back burner."

Research and Development

Interviewees felt that research must continue in the areas of deacidification, paper strengthening, and fungal growth. At the same time, there must also be research efforts directed at "the electronic solutions."

Dissemination of Information

Several respondents felt that the most pressing international preservation issue is the dissemination of information, and ultimately, the sharing of resources.

In my final report, I will discuss these perspectives and make recommendations about the ways in which they can be integrated into library school curicula. Also, I will suggest ways in which library schools can assist in the international dissemination of information.

IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE NEW DELHI 1992

Division:

Section/RT:

Joint Meeting with:

WORKSHOP THEME (IF APPLICABLE):

120-VOSPER-5-E

MINIMAL LEVEL CATALOGUING BY NATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHIC AGENCIES

SUMMARY REPORT

Jay H. Lambrecht
University of Illinois at Chicago

For internal use only:

Meeting No: 64

SI: yes/~~no~~

Estimated number of participants in the meeting:

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MINIMAL LEVEL CATALOGUING BY NATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHIC AGENCIES

SUMMARY REPORT

Jay H. Lambrecht
University of Illinois at Chicago

For nearly twenty years the various ISBDs have allowed the international cataloguing community to begin to give form to the idealized concept of universal bibliographic control. The ISBDs have defined the mandatory elements of bibliographic description for materials published in a variety of physical formats. They have employed conformance to historical bibliographic and cataloguing standards in pursuit of the efficient exchange of standard bibliographic descriptions among national bibliographic agencies. The automation of cataloguing in many such agencies according to UNIMARC guidelines has been seen by many in the international community as leading to the threshold of universal bibliographic control.

Just as that threshold seems about to be crossed, the door to a new era of efficient exchange of standard bibliographic descriptions threatens to be closed. Some national bibliographic agencies have admitted publicly that

they are unable or unwilling to bear the cost of continuing to conform to ISBD standards. Agencies have begun to omit mandatory elements of description according to locally developed minimal level cataloguing guidelines. Such omissions are threatening to URC because cooperating agencies cannot assume that every record contains all standard elements. That threat is compounded by the fact that different minimal level standards have emerged. Universal bibliographic control cannot be based upon potentially substandard records that may have been produced to a variety of standards.

In an attempt to learn the extent of current deviation from ISBD standards, and to determine which mandatory descriptive elements continue to be most vital to universal bibliographic control, I surveyed national bibliographic agencies in 1991 as part of my research for the Robert Vosper IFLA Fellows Programme. The survey was sent to 34 agencies worldwide. Criteria for selection to participate included a combination of size of collection and level of recent participation in the Standing Committee of IFLA's Section on Cataloguing, balanced by the need to assure a diversity of languages, geography, and bibliographic traditions. Twenty-two libraries, or 65 percent of those surveyed, responded.

The first and most startling revelation of this survey is that full adherence to ISBD standards is not nearly universal. Only 7 of 22 responding national bibliographic

agencies (32 percent) claim to include all mandatory ISBD data elements in all of their catalogued records. Only four of the twenty elements designated as mandatory are included in every record from every library: the title proper, the edition statement, the name of the publisher, and the date of publication. Four other elements are included in every record by more than 90 percent of surveyed libraries. They are the standard number, the place of publication, the specific material designation and extent, and the title proper of the series. An additional four elements -- series numbering, statement of responsibility for the title, statement of responsibility for the edition, and dimensions -- are recorded in every record by more than 80 percent of surveyed libraries. The remaining eight elements are excluded from some or all records by 23 to 50 percent of national bibliographic agencies.

Adherence to ISBD standards is purely voluntary, but had been presumed to be widespread. It is apparent that the public admission by some libraries of a failure to comply with those standards has followed or coincided with a quiet failure to comply by a number of other national bibliographic agencies. Universal bibliographic control according to ISBD standards was not quite so near as we might have believed or hoped.

If voluntary compliance with full ISBD standards is not to be effective, the next best alternative is to define a new

minimal level standard that might be adopted by all deviating national bibliographic agencies. Such a standard would need to take into account the relative importance to the international cataloguing community of the twenty currently mandatory elements. The second part of my survey measured that relative importance.

Based on previous research (especially that of the former Centre for Catalogue Research at the University of Bath), it was assumed that eight data elements were of such importance in identifying an item that they should not be omitted from a minimal level ISBD. Surveyed libraries were asked to rank the remaining twelve elements against each other, and to recommend which of those twelve elements might be made optional rather than mandatory.

Some responding libraries, and especially those that believe the current ISBD mandatory elements define the absolute minimum of description, found it very hard to rank twelve elements relative to each other. One library refused to do so. The remaining 21 respondents made it clear that three additional elements -- the statement of responsibility, place of publication, and series title proper -- were the most important to retain. Strong differences of opinion emerged regarding the importance of the edition statement of responsibility, extent, and series numbering. Of significantly less importance were the ISSN of the series, illustration statement, dimensions, series statement of responsibility,

series parallel title, and added edition statement of responsibility.

The relative lack of importance of these last six elements was confirmed by the preference of 6 to 15 of the 21 libraries that those elements be made optional in ISBD. Four libraries felt that the edition statement of responsibility should be made optional, and two or fewer libraries thought that the remaining five elements should become optional.

Based upon these survey results and a number of other factors that include the rules of historical bibliography, the history and current practice of cataloguing, the unique role of national bibliographic agencies, and particularly the ability of each element to contribute to the unique identification of a single item, I have concluded that seven data elements might be made optional in a minimal level ISBD. Those seven elements -- statements of responsibility for the edition and additional edition; illustration statement and dimensions; and series parallel title, series statment of responsibility, and ISSN of the series -- already are omitted from some or all records by a number of national bibliographic agencies. In relation to other elements they are deemed less important, and many libraries would support changing them from mandatory to optional. Finally, if the primary function of elements of descriptive cataloguing is to allow us to distinguish one item from other very similar items, these seven elements do not seem to serve that function

as well as the other thirteen.

Neither purists nor those seeking to minimize the cost of bibliographic description are likely to embrace this proposal. Some are unlikely to be satisfied if any part of the ISBD record is no longer mandatory, while others will be dissatisfied if only a limited number of data elements, some of which occur infrequently in catalogue records, are made optional. At the same time all must acknowledge that an unwillingness to make mutual concessions may destroy the dream of universal bibliographic control. It is my hope that this study will serve as the basis for reaching a new consensus that will please very few but serve us all.